

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Improving Lives Select Commission
2.	Date:	9th July, 2014
3.	Title:	Peer Review – The Impact of Childhood neglect
4.	Directorate:	Children and Young People’s Service

5. Summary

This report provides details to Improving Lives Select Commission on the proposed Peer Review which is due to take place around the impact of childhood neglect in September, 2014. It also covers the current profile of neglect cases in Rotherham.

6. Recommendations

That Improving Lives Select Commission receive this paper and note plans for the peer review.

7. Proposals and Details

Sector Led Improvement

Members of the commission will be aware that there is an expectation that local authorities provide each other with a level of support and challenge. In the Yorkshire and Humber Region the Directors of Children's Services work collaboratively with the support of a dedicated (shared funded) officer who facilitates and supports peer reviews for children's services (education and social care) across the region. Directors and Senior Managers in the region have undertaken specific training for them to undertake such peer reviews.

Peer Review – Neglect

It has been agreed that a Peer Review will take place in Rotherham during the week beginning 8th September which will be led by Eleanor Brazil, Director of Children's Services in Doncaster. The focus of this review will be childhood neglect, the impact that it has on the lives of children and what Rotherham are doing to combat this. It is anticipated that this will look at how partners respond to this issue including the role of our schools. Other members of the team are Mick Gibbs (North Lincolnshire) and Maxine Squire (York City).

The planning for this review has already commenced and officers have started pulling together key evidence and documents in readiness for the review, briefings are taking place with staff and partners and performance data is being analysed to allow officers to evidence to the peer review team what Rotherham's approach is to neglect cases.

Members of the commission will recall that during the OFSTED Child Protection inspection in July 2012 inspectors asked officers when " enough is enough" in relation to children living with the effects of neglect after identifying a couple of cases where children had been living with long term neglect.

The RSCB then commissioned a review of neglect that was subsequently carried out, as a result of this review changes were made which included:

- Revised care plan to ensure social workers apply SMART methodology when planning interventions with families.
- Increased challenge by Safeguarding Conference Chairs and a re-developed "challenge procedure" for Chair's to more effectively challenge operational decision making.
- Roll out of a range of toolkits to aid practitioner reflection on neglect cases, included the Graded Care Profile.
- Improved legal gatekeeping at MASP to ensure that cases where Neglect is prevalent are escalated more swiftly
- Re-allocation of the Family Recovery Programme away from edge of care to be engaged at the point a child is placed on a child protection plan, to allow for early intensive intervention.

In addition, we have also revised our assessment forms as part of the roll out of our single assessment framework in social care, and the new format introduced will enable better quality assessment of need, balancing risks against strengths.

Neglect however is not an isolated issue or area of focus, and cuts across much of the work we deliver in CYPS. Whilst OfSTED challenged the LA on their tolerance of neglect at the acute end of the continuum of need (i.e. not removing children soon enough when subjected to child protection level neglect), we have also implemented strengthening measures at an earlier stage, which improve how we tackle neglect more quickly in the life of a child, which include, and the infrstcure we have put in place for professionals includes:

- Delivering a workforce development programme (Triple A), mandatory for all social workers, which focuses on improved assessment and analysis of families from day 1 of social work engagement.
- Development of the Early Help Support Panel to allow practitioners supporting families through early help services (e.g. via a Family CAF) to raise concerns and seek additional guidance/support before families hit crisis point and are referred to social care.
- Continued delivery of our Troubled Families programmes, providing targeted interventions for neglectful parenting that results in poor school attendance, ASB and worklessness
- Multi-agency learning and development provision rolled out, focused on Neglect.

OFSTED have recently published their report “ in the childs time: professional responses to neglect” findings from this are being used with managers in the service to inform the work of the service, key findings were :

- One third of neglect cases where social care have been involved for a long time have evidence of delay and or drift
- Assessments do not always take account of family history or the impact that neglect has on a child
- Engaging parents in child protection work is often difficult as they are likely to have complex issues of their own
- Non-compliance and disguised compliance of parents

Childhood Neglect In Rotherham

Neglect is often recognised throughout a gradual building picture where a number of factors then trigger interventions and support. It is however not just the responsibility of children’s social care and relies on our partners to recognise the signs and intervene early with support packages to avoid escalation into social care.

In 2013/14 there were 2916 referrals to children’s social care that progressed to assessment, 43% of these had a referral reason which referenced neglect or factors* considered to lead to neglect (domestic abuse, parental drug / alcohol use and mental health).

The Multi-Agency Support Panel considers complex cases where children need a high level of multi-agency resource, or a decision that they meet the threshold for

legal intervention, and many of these include families where there has been substantial neglect. The involvement of key staff from agencies working with adults (RDASH and IDVA, for example) has been instrumental in helping to create plans for children and young people which acknowledge the impact of their parents lifestyle on the children's wellbeing, including understanding the underlying reasons for neglect, and addressing those in cases where substance abuse and domestic abuse are leading to conditions of neglect.

As at 20th June, 34% (463) children in need had a referral reason of neglect or one of the factors* above

Once neglect becomes a significant concern children often become the subject of a child protection plan (CPP), as at 20th June 51% (185) of CPPs had a registration category which includes neglect.

Neglect is also an evident factor when children become looked after with 61% (236) of our current looked after children population having experienced some form of neglect during their life.

8. Finance

There are no significant costs to the peer review itself, other than incidental costs such as car parking costs, IT set up costs, refreshments etc. it's worth noting however that the LGA equivalent of these reviews are in the region of £20,000. These reviews will require officer time to support and preparation time in advance of the review itself in addition to time spent during the review itself (3 days in this instance).

It is clear however that the cost of neglect to CYPS is significant due to the number of cases that social workers are currently involved with.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

It is recognised as good practice to take part in a peer review as these external reviews often contribute to local improvement plans and assist with self assessments to be undertaken and evidence used.

OFSTED however would expect to be presented with previous peer reviews when they inspect children's services under their new framework

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Sector Led improvement is a valuable tool and one that the government recognise as good practice. OFSTED would expect to see a copy of such a report if they were to carry out an inspection in Rotherham

11. Background Papers and Consultation

OFSTED inspection report Rotherham 2012

OFSTED In the Child's time : professional responses to neglect, March 2014

Multi-Agency Review of Serious Neglect, August 2013

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